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BACKGROUND USE ONLY CITE TDCS DB-315/00431-70 (ADVANCE)

COUNTRY: NIGERIA

DOI: 28 JANUARY 1970

SUBJECT: GENERAL GOWON'S VIEWS ON AMERICAN EFFORTS TO
DISCUSS RELIEF PROBLEMS WITH THE FEDERAL
MILITARY GOVERNMENT

ACQ:
SOURCE:

1. AT THE 28 JANUARY 1970 MEETING OF THE FEDERAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (FEC) OF THE FEDERAL MILITARY GOVERNMENT OF NIGERIA (FMG), GENERAL YAKUBU G O W O N , THE HEAD OF THE FMG, SPOKE WITH SOME HEAT ABOUT THE EFFORTS THE AMERICAN EMBASSY IN LAGOS WAS MAKING IN ATTEMPTING TO PRESS ITS ESTIMATES OF RELIEF NEEDS IN THE EAST-CENTRAL STATES ON THE FMG. IT HAD COME TO HIS ATTENTION, GOWON SAID, THAT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY HAD MADE SEVERAL APPROACHES TO HIS GOVERNMENT AND THAT THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR WAS REQUESTING AN URGENT INTERVIEW WITH HIM TO DISCUSS CONDITIONS IN THE EASTERN REGION. GENERAL GOWON MADE CLEAR TO THE MEMBERS OF THE FEC THAT HE WAS VERY ANGRY AT THESE CONTINUED DEMANDS OF THE AMERICANS, WHICH HE CONSIDERED INTERFERENCE IN HIS GOVERNMENT'S AFFAIRS. GENERAL GOWON STATED, "THE AMERICANS WISH TO INVESTIGATE CONDITIONS IN PARTS OF OUR COUNTRY, BUT I DO NOT DEMAND TO INVESTIGATE CONDITIONS IN ALABAMA OR IN VIETNAM." HE INDICATED TO THE FEC THAT IN HIS SPEECH TO THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS IN NIGERIA ON THE FOLLOWING DAY HE WAS GOING TO MENTION THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT TOLERATE INTERFERENCE IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF NIGERIA. HE SAID THAT HE SPECIFICALLY MEANT THE AMERICANS, AS HE DEEPLY RESENTED THEIR CURRENT TACTICS.

2. GENERAL GOWON ALSO INDICATED THAT WHAT DISTURBED HIM MOST WAS THAT HE THOUGHT RELATIONS WITH THE AMERICANS WERE CURRENTLY GOING SO WELL. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] WHICH DESCRIBES THE FEC MEETING OF 21 JANUARY 1970 DURING WHICH GENERAL GOWON PUT AN END TO A DISCUSSION CRITICIZING AMERICAN RELIEF EFFORTS BY STATING THAT HE FELT THAT AMERICAN-NIGERIAN RELATIONS WERE GOING ALONG QUITE WELL.) IN FACT, GOWON SAID, IT WAS HARD TO UNDERSTAND WHY THE AMERICANS SHOULD PUSH SO HARD ON THE RELIEF ISSUE WHEN MOST US-NIGERIAN BILATERAL PROBLEMS APPEARED TO BE OVER. IN ENDING THIS MONOLOGUE GENERAL GOWON SAID THAT PERHAPS THIS CONTINUED AMERICAN PREOCCUPATION WITH CONDITIONS IN THE EAST CENTRAL STATE WAS COVERING UP SOME FACTOR ABOUT WHICH THE NIGERIANS WERE NOT AWARE. FOR EXAMPLE, PERHAPS THE AMERICANS WERE MUCH MORE INVOLVED WITH THE SECESSIONISTS THAN HAD BEEN PREVIOUSLY UNDERSTOOD AND THIS CURRENT CAMPAIGN WAS IN SOME WAY RELATED TO "AN EARLIER AMERICAN EFFORT TO SUSTAIN BIAFRA."

3. (SOURCE COMMENT: PRO-AMERICAN LEADERS OF THE FMG CANNOT UNDERSTAND THE CURRENT PRESSURE BEING PUT ON THE FMG BY THE AMERICAN EMBASSY IN LAGOS ON THE ISSUE OF RELIEF. WHILE THERE MAY BE SOME PROBLEMS CONNECTED WITH THE DELIVERY OF FOOD TO THE EX-REBEL AREA, CONDITIONS THERE ARE BASICALLY QUITE GOOD. NIGERIAN OFFICIALS DO NOT ACCEPT THE PREMISE THAT THERE IS ACTUAL OR IMPENDING STARVATION AND FEEL WITH THE ADDITION OF MORE TRANSPORT AND MORE TIME, THE BASIC FEEDING PROBLEMS OF THE EAST-CENTRAL STATE WILL BE SOLVED. THE FMG IS QUITE PROUD OF ITS EFFORTS TOWARD RECONCILIATION AND THE SUCCESS OF ITS OWN RELIEF EFFORTS TO DATE. IN NIGERIAN MINDS, CONDITIONS ARE INCREASINGLY SATISFACTORY IN THE EX-REBEL AREA AND CONTINUED AMERICAN INSISTENCE THAT SERIOUS PROBLEMS EXIST IS CAUSING DEEP RESENTMENT TOWARD THE UNITED STATES.)

4. FIELD DISSEM: [REDACTED]

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